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ABSTRACT

The materials in this paper were drawn from an action caucus called to seek common criteria for the presentation and judging of oral interpretation and forensic tournaments. The first section of the paper consists of presentations made by participants. Topics covered in these presentations are (1) consistency in judging, (2) the role of oral interpretation in forensics, (3) the possibility of uniformity in judging oral interpretation, (4) the need for carefully formulated criteria for judging, (5) the problems of evaluating literature-in-performance at a competitive event, and (6) the need for modal distinctions in contest categories. The second section of the paper presents a precis of the two-hour discussion that followed the presentations, and a brief final section provides suggestions and recommendations emerging from the caucus. (FL)

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Report on an Action Caucus on Oral Interpretation in Forensic Competition

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Report on an Action Caucus on Oral Interpretation
in Forensic Competition

An action caucus was held on November 5, 1982 at the SCA convention in Louisville, Kentucky to seek common criteria for the presentation and judging of oral interpretation in forensic tournaments. This report consists of three parts: first, summaries of prepared statements by those who participated in planning and conducting the caucus, second, a precis of the two hour discussion which followed the presentations, and third, a list of suggestions considered during the discussion.

The Prepared Comments

Aiming for Consistency

James M. St. Clair

Thomas Colley

In my opinion, the most important decision concerning oral interpretation pertains to judging philosophy: should the critic judge a presentation by what it ought to be or by what it is? A critic trained in oral interpretive reading knows that there are certain important standards in the field which are almost always violated by the most successful interpretation contestants. Is it then fair and just to judge such speakers by those academic standards, or should the performances be judged by what has become conventional in competitive interpretive reading? Until a clear and stated decision is made by or for all judges, there will continue to be inconsistency in judging. Dr. Colley and I suggest, then, that the basic cause of inconsistent judging is that there is no real agreement on how to coach interpretation. We who train the students have different approaches to the event, some of which actually violate the stated rules of the event.

Interpretation rules often specify, even duo interpretation, that this is not an acting event. But when we listen to the contestants we quickly discover that

many no longer consider that rule in preparing students. An outsider to forensics, called in to judge, quickly senses that competitive interpretation has conventions that differ from oral interpretation theory. Dr. Colley was one such outsider now active in forensics.

Thomas Colley on Oral Interpretation in Forensics

My graduate degrees are in Theatre (acting and directing), with a minor in oral interpretation. I have always viewed acting and O.I. as related, but different arts. The distinction, as I understand it, can best be summarized in the phrase: an actor represents, an interpreter presents. The consequence of this distinction, in performance, is essentially one of relative distance. The actor is viewed by the audience as a person to be watched, observed from the distance. The actor shows. In contrast, the interpreter is close to the audience, one of them actually. The interpreter shares with the audience the experience of the literature by remaining part of the audience. Rather than show, the interpreter suggests. The visions, the things to be seen, are all in the imaginations of the audience.

I had been teaching acting and oral interpretation for nearly ten years before I had my first experience as an oral interpretation judge at a forensics tournament. I must admit that I walked away from that first experience confused and feeling like I had better reexamine my ideas about oral interpretation.

The things I observed in that first experience were repeated in subsequent judging assignments. In brief, this is what I observed:

1. Homogeneity -- the competitors all sounded the same. I have the clear impression that there is a standard vocal and physical attack that is recommended to the students. They all used a standard vocal and physical attack: the same resonant tones, the same pace and rate, the same whole body moves to support transitions, and the same head-high, sober expression, direct gaze. The only distinction from one to the other was in terms of

humor or no humor. Judging was reduced to a matter of technique, degree of slickness.

2. Distance -- Probably the thing I found most distracting was the sense of performance, of distance. I have had the clear impression, while judging, that the objective of the oral interpreters was to show emotions. The students seemed to be oriented toward demonstrating to me that they understood the thoughts and feelings in the piece and that they could experience them while reading the literature. I felt like an outsider, a distant observer watching somebody pretending to think and feel some things for the sake of the demonstration.
3. Memorization -- I am fully aware that memorization can occur accidentally from using the same piece of literature for several tournaments. However, the overwhelming majority of memorized selections suggested to me that there had been an effort expended to memorize. The manuscript in hand became a convention, a prop, a signal intended to show me that this was supposed to be oral interpretation.
4. Acting -- When an Oral Interpreter is reading a piece of literature written in the first person, one of the big difficulties he faces is staying in the realm of suggestion. In the majority of the forensics selections I heard which were written in the first person, the readers either failed to avoid the mistake of literal vocal and physical impersonations or set out to read the piece in that way. In either case, the consequence was acting rather than oral interpretation.
5. General Impression -- Overall, I tend to come away from oral interpretation rounds with a feeling of having heard a series of contrived readings. The aim of the readers seems to be to display facility. On those grounds, the readings tend to be quite good.

The trouble is that the focus seems to have become misdirected. Oral interpretation is an art. Like any other art, it is, in essence, an act of communication. In the act of communication, the content of the message is the important thing, not the techniques used to deliver the content. Technical display is not art.

Oral Interpretation is the art of eliciting in the mind of a listener the imagistic, intellectual, and emotional potential of a piece of literature through the subtle and appropriate use of voice and body. A good oral interpreter should be able to cause his listeners to build images; he should be able to weave his spell without the use of vocal or physical gymnastics or devices outside himself. When I listen to oral interpretation, I am not nearly as concerned with technical skill as I am with sincerity, clarity and sharing.

I believe that some changes should be made in the way oral interpretation events are coached. The most important thing is for the coaches and competitors to keep in mind that Oral Interpretation is an art. Not only that, they must keep their focus on the things that this particular art can do which other arts cannot. Fundamentally, the uniqueness of oral interpretation is that it is a co-creative experience involving the author, the reader, and the audience. Each makes an important contribution. The author provides the initial direction, the interpreter offers his perceptions, and the audience provides the stage. The unique providence of oral interpretation is the imagination. The oral interpretation competitors must be coached to focus on sharing, on contributing to the collective experience of the literature with the audience by never becoming separate from that audience, by remaining always a part of the audience for that piece of literature.

Conclusion

If you accept Dr. Colley's perception of what oral interpretation should be in forensics, or even if you do not accept it, I contend that you must conclude that

any inconsistencies in judging interp begin with those who coach interpretive reading. A majority of judges are active coaches who presumably impress their approaches to reading onto their students. If we cannot agree among coaches what oral interpretation should be, then we certainly can't complain that judging is inconsistent. Consistency begins with the product itself, not the evaluation of it. There must be agreement once and for all on the issue of whether interpretive reading is to be interpretation in the academic sense, or acting with manuscript in hand. That a choice be made is even more important than what the choice is if the goal is consistent judging.

Is Uniformity Possible in Judging Oral Interpretation? (Raising Some Questions)

Jeanine Rice Barr

In order to standardize judging for the forensic events in oral interpretation it will be necessary to determine a standard definition of terms. Considering the wide range of opinion in the field of interpretation, I wonder if this is possible. Consider the following definitions which are not meant to be a thorough literature search, but rather a sampling of the variety of definitions offered in popular textbooks used in teaching the art of oral interpretation. "...interpretation may best be defined as the study of literature through the medium of oral performance."[1] "Oral Interpretation, as we are using the phrase, refers to selection, preparation, and oral performance of the written word - a process that is much richer in experience than what you may have known as 'oral reading.'"[2] "Interpretation is the art of communicating to an audience a work of literary art in its intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic entirety."[3] "Interpretive reading is discovering - discovering your perceptions of the meaning in the author's recorded experience and then finding means for performing that discovery, with all its dramatic immediacy, so that the

audience may feel and respond to the author's truth."[4] "Interpretation is an artistic process of studying literature through performance and sharing that study with an audience. The three basic ingredients of the interpretation process are: a performer (you), a piece of literature, and an audience."[5] I ask you, is a common definition possible?

The questions I am raising come from academic training and teaching oral interpretation in the classroom setting, directing Reader's Theatre productions, and coaching oral interpretation for forensics for the past fifteen years. The state of the field cannot be ignored. The most recent books lean more and more toward becoming the persona of the narrator and characters. An SCA panel, Reader's Theatre versus Reader's Theatre, proved the point to me quite clearly. Where does interpreting stop and acting begin, or does it? I personally feel we may lose the art of interpretation completely; it may be unavoidable. This issue alone causes considerable confusion in forensic competition.

Another major issue that needs to be discussed is the process of interpretation in the competitive setting. While approaches vary, the majority of definitions of interpretation do include 1) the literature, 2) the performer or communicator, and 3) the audience. As I have listened to round after round of prose and poetry over the years, I have found myself wondering - are we encouraging only the performance aspect, while negating the literary study and audience participation that completes the process? How much actual analysis is involved in preparing a selection for competition? As coaches, I know we could put much more emphasis on understanding the literature. How much audience feeback is given the performer during a round? The judge is usually writing most of the time so eye contact is difficult. If there are other competitors in the room at all - so often they are running the pentathalon race - they are more concerned with their

own performance than they are with giving feedback. This does not give the performer much to respond to, does it?

Some schools have stopped competing in oral interpretation and have moved toward the festival concept. Edwin Cohen describes the tournament setting as a phenomenon of the 50's and 60's.[6] Yet many of us continue to view it as valid today and encourage our students to continue competing. Can we define valid objectives for competition in oral interpretation? If so, we must communicate these objectives both in the academic discipline of oral interpretation and on the forensic circuit.

Finally, I believe we must take a good look at ourselves - as coaches and as judges. Are we qualified? Are the people we hire to judge qualified? Should standards be set for judges? Most of us who coach forensics had specific academic backgrounds in speech communication. Using my own background as an example, I have studied rhetoric, persuasion, and oral interpretation, and continue to teach these areas so I am aware of the latest insights in these fields. However, it has been twelve years since I taught argumentation and coached debate. I would not want to step into a round of CEDA debate as a judge today. Conversely, I have talked with many debate judges who do not even like, much less understand, prose, poetry or dramatic interpretation. In the past few years, we have seen a rise in the number of students who return to the circuit as judges for their alma mater. After four years of competition many are very competent. However, I question the validity of a ballot from someone I know for a fact never competed in oral interpretation. Should judges, both coaches and former students, be screened in any way? Or should guidelines be established by the NFA and/or tournament directors?

I sincerely hope that those of us who are committed to forensics can make some decisions as a result of this action caucus. I have covered the major issues as I

see them in an attempt to generate discussion. I hope we will all talk about these and other issues that need addressing. Competition in oral interpretation will only be as good as we are!

Some questions to generate discussion

1. Can those of us who consider speech our academic discipline agree on a common definition of oral interpretation?

2. Is oral interpretation suggesting, becoming, or something else? (the old interpreting versus acting argument)

3. How flexible are we willing to be? Are we as informed as we should be about the latest thinking in the field? Or are we rigidly clinging to our old ideas?

4. Is the art of interpretation served by forensic activity? How specifically? Conversely, is the tournament setting valid for the art of interpretation?

5. Do we as judges provide the students with the audience necessary for completing the interpretive process?

6. Do we as coaches encourage our students to study the literature or are we encouraging the performance skills approach only?

7. Do coaches have the responsibility to be academically qualified to judge all forensic events or should we specialize in our academic areas? What problems will this cause for tournament directors?

8. If we can define and standardize oral interpretation in the forensic setting, how do we bring those teams which are either without coaches or coached by professors in other disciplines into the mainstream?

9. Should we set standards for graduate student judges? (Example: they may judge in those events which they competed in at a national tournament.)

10. What problems will be caused for tournament directors by the ideas we generate?

An Inductive Examination of Seventy Two Ballots

Carolyn Keefe

When discussing the matter of "Developing Common Criteria for Presentation and Judging of Oral Interpretation" it seems only reasonable to ask, "What criteria are now being used by the judges of oral interpretation?" One way to answer this question is to examine the ballots written for competitors on the intercollegiate forensic circuit.

My report provides the data I obtained from an inductive examination of seventy-two ballots, thirty-six from poetry readers and thirty-six from prose readers. These were selected randomly and supplied by Suzanne Johnson of Humboldt State University (CA), Butch Maltby of Bethel College (MN), Irene Ziegler of Old Dominion University (VA), and the present panel member (PA), with equal numbers of ballots representing the West, Midwest, and the East.

Summarized below, arranged in descending order of frequency, is a categorization of the comments written by the judges. In each case the figure indicates the number of ballots mentioning that particular category. No single category was tabulated twice for any one ballot. None of the ballots, it should be pointed out, carry any criteria mandated by a particular college or forensic association.

Vocal Response ----------50
* Introduction/Transitions --39
* Bodily Response, including Posture and Movement ----22
Timing/Pacing----------16
Command of Material--------13
Character Placement/Eye Contact----------13
Feeling/Mood----------10
Theme---------- 8
Number of Selections------- 4
Length of Program---------- 4
Empathy---------- 3
Acting versus Interpreting- 3
Energy Level---------- 2
Attire/Artifacts---------- 2
Order of Selections-------- 1
Poise---------- 1
Adaptation to Room--------- 1
Purpose of Author---------- 1

* Material/Selection----31
Characterization------30

Several conclusions emerge from this inductive analysis of oral interpretation ballots:

1. The judges make more than twice as many comments about vocal response than they do about bodily response, although both categories rank in the top five of the twenty categories.

2. Not all the categories are discrete. Characterization, for instance, subsumes at least vocal response, bodily response, timing/pacing, character placement/eye contact, and feeling/mood. When developing criteria it is preferable that each criterion represent a distinct behavior so that the student will be able to identify the behavior, or lack of it, that prompted each comment.
3. While acting versus interpreting is often a conversation subject at tournaments, it appears on only three ballots. If these ballots are typical, then this long-contested issue is not an important basis for judgment.
4. No category is mentioned on every ballot, not even the delivery components of vocal response and bodily response. The author's purpose, which is essential to literary analysis, appears on only a single ballot. On the average each ballot addresses only 3.5 of the above categories.

My ballot study has shown this panelist the need for carefully formulated criteria that would enable oral interpretation judges to make consisten rankings and ratings and at the same time would clearly specify for interpreters the behaviors that their evaluators found wanting or not.

Evaluating Literature-in-Performance at a Competitive Event: Can It Be Done?

John J. Allen

What is the province of evaluation/criticism, and how can we apply some flexible standards when judging competitive oral interpretation?

Beverly Whitaker Long supplies this definition of evaluation as it applies to performed literature:

> Evaluation may be defined as a judgment, an exercise in normative discourse . . . , noting the worth or value of a performance. Judgments appear in good, bad, or neutral "notices," citations or defamations, a win or loss . . . . In a contest or a festival it is commonly a ranking or a rating. . . .
> Ideally and foremost, an evaluation assists the student. First it identifies the performance: it clarifies what happened and then it extends the possibilities for both the performer's and the listener's engagement with a particular literary text. The immediate goal in evaluating performances is to help students understand the extent to which they have realized the experiences in particular texts. A more far-reaching goal is to indicate how students can develop further: i.e., where they can reasonably expect other performances--including their own--to lead them in experiencing literature.[2]

Adopting this as a general guideline, the key phrase is "an evaluation assists the student." Similarly, Elbert Bowen wrote that criticism contributes to others' thinking, partly through discussion,[3] while Wilma Grimes has called the teacher of oral interpretation a "go-between" between the average reader and the literary artist,[4] and Ms. Long has suggested that evaluators are arbitrators between textual understanding and delivery techniques.[5]

Today it can safely be said that no school of interpretive thought would deny that the literature must come first in performance. This leads us to the position that the evaluator must know thoroughly the literature performed and, theoretically, be able and willing to discuss it with the performer. So the first requirement of sound evaluation of performed literature is that the evaluator know the literature and any reasonable performance options open to the reader. Regardless of the evaluator's school of thought, only when he knows the literature can he defend his judgments regarding how well the reader executed the text in terms of subject, theme, tone, mood, etc., as well as stylistic demands.

Long calls the known characteristics of a text its "certainties," aspects of a text which are not implied, but are.[6] These certainties lead to knowledge of "probabilities," i.e., characteristics implied but not explicitly stated.[7] In

addition to certainties and probabilities are performance "possibilities," choices which are marginally and conditionally acceptable if they do not dilute the effectiveness of the text's certainties and probabilities.[8] And, as logic dictates, a text may be interpreted in such a manner that the performer allows "distortions" so that the experience of the text is ultimately lost.[9] Ms. Long encourages evaluation which aggressively endorses certainties, encourages probabilities, tolerates viable possibilities, and rejects distortions.[10]

I suggest that while Long's conditions are sound and workable in the classroom, evaluation in the competitive arena is a significantly different situation. First, the judge may not know the literature well or at all. Second, contests normally prohibit dialogue between performer and judge until all competition is completed.

Perhaps we should aim at developing such fine coaches and coaching principles that someday we all might judge the performance of an unfamiliar text trusting that the reader has become something of an expert on that text, leaving us free to rank contestants on the matter of technique alone. But even then we are confronted with another problem, namely that of the parameters of physical and vocal delivery, a matter hotly contested in many circles.

On way or another, critics must be held accountable for their estimates of performance. They must be able to defend the rankings they assign, and this means being able to justify specific hierarchical standards which are applied to performance. Otherwise we must accept that a great deal of judgment is, alas, based on impressions only, and that such impressions are based on conjecture and opinion as much as on fact.

A Plea for Modal Distinctions in Contest Categories

James Pearse

This action caucus searches to establish more "uniform criteria in the criticism and evaluation" of interpretation events in the contest situation. I believe

uniformity can be achieved through adopting category designations more precise than the current, widely-used items (i.e. poetry and prose).

In poetry, for example, attempts should be made to emphasize performance skills that demonstrate a competitor's ability to recognize and manifest poetic structure. Poetry could be divided into three sub-categories according to modal distinctions as follows:

a) lyric poetry--poems projecting the feeling of the persona wherein the speaker talks principally to self. In this category contestants could use sonnets, descriptive lyrics, elegies, odes, or confessional lyrics.

b) dramatic poetry--poetry containing a dramatized persona clearly not the poet; traditionally poems spoken in the first-person. In this category contestants could use dramatic lyrics (i.e. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"), dramatic narratives (i.e. "Wild Grapes"), dramatic monologues (i.e. "Dover Beach"), or dramatic soliloquies (i.e. "Porphyria's Lover").

c) epic poetry--poetry wherein the story being told holds primary focus. In this category contestants could use ballads, metrical tales, or epic poems.

By choosing to divide categories modally we could highlight literary structure and bring more credibility to categories and more integrity to judging because the performance skills required to master the more precise poetic structure of a category would be uniform. Since we are attempting to develop the skills of the interpreter to handle various types of literary structures, I believe our contest categories should reflect the pedagogical impact of the performances we encourage.

With broad categories like poetry and prose it is possible for a performer to read a short story and a narrative poem and satisfy the categorical divisions. However, the short story and the narrative poem both emphasize the storyteller and the establishment of firm control over the vantage point from which the experience is related. Only one area of performance skill is found in two categories whose boundaries are so ambiguously defined as "poetry" and "prose." Moving to categories subdivided into modal distinctions allows for a clearer establishment of rules and guidelines for both performers and judges.

Precis of Discussion

Problem

We see the same sort of undesirable reading or performance behaviors repeatedly in oral interpretation competition.

We see slickness, showiness, and emphasis on technique.

We see performance, often memorized, to "show off" the reader or performer rather than an effort to share the meaning of the literature with the listeners through a reading based on a thoughtful analysis of the piece.

We see students performing, sometimes, clone-like, reflecting the influence of their instructor's style rather than developing their own.

We see too much narrative poetry read possibly because it is easier.

Discussion of Problem and Possible Solutions

Improved judging assisted by a well designed ballot could discourage undesirable reading or performance behavior.

A ballot could offer criteria or categories for evaluation while listening to an interpretive reading of prose or poetry.

A ballot could encourage consistency in judging.

A ballot could be helpful for a judge unfamiliar with interpretation theory and practice.

If presented with a list of criteria for evaluation, a judge may be tempted to look for something done in the reading that should not be done. He/she may seek after fault where there is no fault.

If an experienced judge does not notice something during a reading--if he/she has to think about it later, be guided to it by a ballot, then that aspect may be unappropriate or unimportant for a particular interpretation.

A ballot contains built-in assumptions. For example, a category may refer to willingness to engage in communication by establishing eye contact. This could be unappropriate for lyric poetry.

An inexperienced judge may automatically check off categories without adequate analysis.

Long's rubrics, certainties, probabilities, possibilities, and distortions direct attention to reading based on analysis of the literature. There is no variance to these categories. There are things that are absolutely certain in "To His Coy Mystress" that must be represented in the reading. We cannot look for certainties, probabilities, possibilities, and distortions with a ballot.

The modal approach suggested by Pearse could be valuable. Require the reading of lyric, dramatic, or epic modes for a certain interim to assure more than narrative verse would be read and possibly encourage a closer examination of the literature by the student.

The modal approach could encourage a greater variety in oral interpretation behaviors in the forensic setting. Different types of literature require different approaches.

Problem

Judging of oral interpretation is influenced by various theories, paradigms, personal preferences, and sometimes prejudices.

There is more diversity in theory and practice in oral interpretation than in public address.

In an effort to encourage individuality and creativity, we had become so diverse in approaches to oral interpretation that it has become an almost "unjudgable event" in forensics.

There seem to be both said and unsaid conventions which influence judging. For example, a judge may wish to give first place to a reader who attempted a more difficult piece. But what do we mean by difficult? A quiet, subdued reading may be very difficult, while a histrionic performance could be achieved through ritualistic mimicry. Often a judge will indicate poor understanding of interpretation by suggesting that the student choose a piece which would "show him/her off" more.

Occasionally, a judge will give a lower evaluation because he/she simply doesn't like the piece or believes that a particular type, such as black literature, is read too often.

Discussion of the Problem and Possible Solutions

Diversity of approach is good. Diversity of reaction by judges is also good. If interpretation is communication, we must expect different reactions as we do in oratory or extemporaneous speaking. Let's not substitute homogeneity we don't like,

such as slickness, with another fostered by an attempt to develop consistent criteria for the presentation and evaluation of oral interpretation.

Conventions existent in forensics such as requiring the use of a manuscript or sharply limiting walking and gestures create a more restrictive environment than a classroom in which students may choose to use a manuscript, walk, gesture, or even use props and costumes according to their understanding of the literature.

Long's vocabulary which puts focus on the literature is appropriate here too. There may be diversity in both performance and reaction to performance. But, there is no diversity in her categories.

Requiring that a particular mode of poetry be read for a set interim could contribute to application of more consistent criteria for evaluation. Ballads, lyrics, etc. each speak for certain evaluative considerations appropriate to them.

Comments by an outside expert in oral interpretation after a final round of interpretation--after the ballots had been submitted by the judges--can contribute to uniting better ideas about oral interpretation to presentation and judging in forensic contests.

Such comments could create dialogue among judges, contestants, and the audience in the final round of interpretation.

Such comments may indicate that frequent winners due to focus upon themselves are not practicing good interpretation.

Consultants are used with success in oral interpretation festivals. The major difference between festivals and forensics is that in the latter readers are ranked.

Outside consultants have commented on rhetorical criticism in forensic contents. Although some had no experience in forensics, they were able to make helpful remarks appropriate for a rhetorical criticism bound by a ten minute limit. They had held well attended colloquies on rhetorical criticism during tournaments.

Often in novice tournaments, experts make comments on the quality of debates.

Comments by an outside critic may be superfluous. What could an outside critic offer that a judge trained in forensic interpretation could not offer?

Could not an outside critic be opposed to oral interpretation competition in forensics? Could not he/she be opposed to established practices in forensic competition? Could not these beliefs influence his/her comments? Could not an outsider subtly impose his/her ideas about forensics and/or interpretation in forensics through comments made about the observed performances?

Could not there be those active in forensics who would take exception to the role of the outside critic?

Problem

Often, we must judge readings of literature with which we are not familiar. Therefore, it is possible to be "carried away" by a particular reading, which, according to Long's vocabulary, could be a distortion of the piece.

Discussion of the Problem and Possible Solutions

We are intelligent folk. Even though we may not know a piece of literature, we can listen hard and apply our past training and experience in making a judgment.

Although various of us had courses in Shakespeare, we may not feel able to judge anything read from Shakespeare. We need to know the piece.

As required for oratory in many tournaments, the selections to be read could be submitted at registration during a tournament. If a judge knows that he/she is going to evaluate interpretation, he/she can glance over the selections and read those he/she doesn't know. With selection in hand, he/she could discuss a reading with a student after the contest.

Pearse's suggestion of the modal approach pertains here also. If, say, proverbs were read for a particular interim, judges perforce would become more familiar with them.

Requiring opening remarks whereby the student offers justification of what he/she is attempting to do with the piece could foster better analysis of the literature by the student and also help the judge evaluate what the student is trying to do.

The introduction should represent the student's grasp of the literature. The judge then could ask two questions. Is this analysis reasonable? Did the interpretation evolve reasonably from this analysis?

Such an introduction may prove helpful for an inexperienced judge.

We do not need such an introduction. If the reading is well done, the interpretation is clear.

What would keep such introductions from coming full cloth from books of literature?

Oral interpretation is a creative art. A pedantic introduction would be unappropriate. It is better to spend time creating the setting, the mood, starting the experience with the literature.

Problem

There are many persons judging oral interpretation who have had no training or

background in this communicative art.

Discussion of the Problem and Possible Solutions

As was said at the opening of the caucus, a tournament is no better than the judging.

Forensic instructors should be asked on the invitation or registration forms what they feel qualified to judge and if possible, placed in those categories. Thereby, a pool of qualified judges could be created.

It is very difficult to place judges in desired events. The basic problem is to get a person into a room to judge a particular event. The director of the tournament fights time as replies to invitations come in the mail or over the telephone.

To place judges appropriate to skills and abilities is especially difficult in small tournaments.

Often, potentially good judges in a fine tournament are students participating in competition. They are eliminated because they are competing.

Just how many persons are qualified to judge interpretation in contrast to those in debate or informative speaking? Has anyone investigated this?

Is it true that usually debate coaches judge debate whereas almost anyone judges interpretation?

These difficulties do not argue against trying to place the right person in the right room to make a defensible, subjective judgment of readings.

Suggestions and Recommendations

During the discussion, Jeanine Barr commented that those present had the professional responsibility to carry out some of the ideas considered as they saw fit, that efforts to improve the presentation and judging of oral interpretation should start at the "grass roots," and that outside critics would comment on the quality of interpretation after the final round during the York College Novice Tournament to take place on February 12 and 13, 1983. The following suggestions or recommendations were mentioned during the discussion and are listed for consideration:

1. Selections for oral interpretation of prose and poetry be taken from a list of twenty-five authors.

2. A mode of poetry, lyric dramatic, or epic should be chosen for reading for a specified interim. In the discussion such terms as narrative, ballad, and the Proverbs were also used in discussing this suggestion.

3. Copies of the selections to be read should be submitted before the forensic tournament.

4. Judges should be assigned according to training and experience. A pool could be formed by asking professors active in forensics to identify their areas of expertise on the tournament invitation or registration forms.

5. Recognized scholars in oral interpretation should criticize the quality of interpretation after a final round and the judges' ballots had been submitted for tallying tournament results.

6. Students should present justification or arguments for their interpretation as introductions to their readings.

Participants suggested a follow-up caucus during the 1983 SCA convention. A summary of this report will be sent to officers in the National Forensic Association, the American Forensic Association, and the Speech Communication Association. Further dialogue may take place.

Notes for Barr's Comments

[1]Wallace A. Bacon, The Art of Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p. 6.

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[3]Charlotte I. Lee and Timothy Gura, Oral Interpretation, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), p. 3.

[4]Louise M. Scrivner and Dan Robinette, A Guide to Oral Interpretation: Solo and Group Performance, 2d. ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1980), p. 4.

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[4]Beverly Whitaker Long, "Critical Reasons and Literature in Performance," Speech Teacher, 18 (September 1969), pp. 191-93.

[5]Long, "Evaluating Performed Literature," p. 276.

[6]Ibid.,pp. 276-77

[7]Ibid.,p. 277.

[8]Ibid.,p. 278.

[9]Ibid.,p. 281.